

REFLECTIONS

Upon some late

Alterations in the Ministry.

April 10. 1757.

EVERY particular Constitution hath its peculiar Principles. These are the Springs, that actuate the Machine of Government; they are the Stamina of our political Life, the Maxims upon which all our Reasonings must be founded. In Proportion as these Principles are violated or preserved, exactly in that Proportion is the Health and Vigour, the Sickness and Feebleness of the State. For Instance, the Choice of his Servants, or to use perhaps a juster Expression, of all the great Officers of the Crown is an unquestionable Prerogative of a British Sovereign. However it hath been ill-understood by weak Princes, or misrepresented by the Flattery of their Minions, or abused by Tyrants to the wicked Purposes of arbitrary Power, still it subsists, and must for ever subsist in our Constitution, because it follows in direct and necessary Consequence from that Part of the constitutional System which hath assigned to our Monarchs the Execution of the Laws.

This Prerogative, and indeed all others intrusted to the Crown, was not principally intended as an Ornament, and Honour to the Prince, but a Means of Defence and Security to the People. The supreme Magistrate was by this Prerogative

gative enabled in Peace, to maintain the Laws in their due Dignity; in War, to act with greater Vigour and Celerity. For these Reasons it was placed inviolably in the Crown. A popular Minister therefore, if we understand by the Expression a Minister chosen by the People, is as little known to the Government of these Nations, as a sole or despotic Minister. It is a Degree of democratical Influence, which can no more enter into our Constitution, than any other republican Principles, whether of Aristocracy or Oligarchy. Yet this was lately the beloved Language of a Party, when the People, as they were called, obtruded not one alone, but a whole Brotherhood of Ministers upon their Sovereign. Yet *the People* is a kind of technical Term for our own Faction, as *all the World* is a familiar Expression to signify our particular acquaintance. The untravelled Villager throws down his Eye from the next Mountain's Top, and calls his little Horizon *the whole Earth*.

But let us not endeavour to keep alive the Memory of a Transaction, which violated the wisest Form of Government, that ever blessed Mankind. Better the Remembrance of it should perish for ever, blotted out of the Annals of Britain, and branded with some Mark of public Disapprobation, like that which was pronounced upon a *late certain Information*, that it should never descend as a Precedent to Posterity. An Information, that violated the Privileges of Parliament, and would have eluded the Justice of the Nation.

However as Papers of this Kind, even in the Writer's Vanity, can hardly be supposed to enter into our future History; as they are written for the Instruction of the present Generation

tion alone, we shall consider this Transaction simply in itself, without any severe Reflections upon it, and even without regard to its Consequenees.

His Majesty saw with equal Grief and Indignation the fatal Effects of a late timid, procrastinating Administration ; he heard the Complaints of his People ; he promised them Redress and Justice ; he was not unable to distinguish between their Complaints and the bold Demands of an ill-judging Multitude, enflamed by an impetuous Faction ; he knew by whom, and by what Arts they were enflamed, yet, determined to give them every possible satisfaction, he resigned his Prerogative, and received the Minister they recommended. As he suffered, not without Dignity, for there is Dignity in suffering, the first Insolence, that forced its Way into his Presence, so he bore with Temper the repeated Indignities, with which he was personally insulted in the Cabinet. He saw the Promise he had made to his People delayed by the bold Arts of his Minister, and his Justice branded with the Name of Cruelty. Even this last Outrage he seems determined to have endured, had these Ministers of Faction and the Multitude been capable of performing the Services, their Country required, and which they themselves had so liberally promised. On the contrary, when he saw the supplies attempted to be raised by wild and visionary Projects ; when he saw our Coasts insulted, and our Shipping taken beyond all * Numbers in any equal Period of Time ; when the only Fleet, that had been

* The Reader will not wonder at the Complaints of the Merchants for want of Convoys when he is assured, that not less than one hundred thirty nine of their Ships have been taken by the Enemy from the first of February to the fifth of April.

fitted out to annoy the Enemy, was detained in Port, and idly waited for the Command of an Admiral, for no other conceivable Reason, but because he was related to the first *L*—of the *A*—y, then *H I S M A J E S T Y* remembered, that his great Office was instituted for the Preservation ahd Glory of his Subjects. He resumed that Prerogative, under which our Ancestors had been glorious and fortunate. He had been forced to employ (and who can be sorry, that he chuses to dismiss?) a first Lord of the Admiralty, who cannot protect our Trade; a Chancellor of the Exchequer, who can not raise the supplies, and a Secretary of State, who can do—absolutely nothing.

We now see a Nobleman chosen to preside over the Admiralty, who hath already given abundant Proofs of his Abilities in this great Office. Age, that hath not impaired his Vigour, or affected his Understanding, must have added to his Experience. Faction and Party have not here solicited for Employment, and as little can Ambition be supposed to have seduced the noble Lord from his Retirement. His Affection for his Royal Master, and his Duty as a Subject, made him without Hesitation obey the first Command, that called him to the Service of his Country.

From this first Alteration we may with pleasure form some Idea of *H I S M A J E S T Y*'s Intention, in any future Changes he may think proper to make in his Ministry. It appears, that he purposed to give all the great Offices of State to Persons distinguished by their Birth and Fortune; their Probity and Understanding. The two latter give Hopes and Credit to an Administration; the two former are a Pledge and Security to their Country. Surely the Merchant, who has the richest Cargo

on

on Board, can hardly be suspected of an Intention to sink the Vessel.

But the Gentlemen, who shall obey HIS MAJESTY when he commands them to the Service of their Country — are they suspected of Ambition? Is this the Season to be ambitious? To correct the Errors of two former Administrations; to retrieve the Honour of the British Flag; to act with Vigour against a powerful Enemy; to raise the Supplies thus late in the year, when the Schemes of the last Minister have been baffled and disappointed, undoubtedly demands very superior Abilities. The attempt, if formed by Ambition, were Madness, but if inspired by Virtue, and conducted with Wisdom, hath a fair Appearance of Success.

But without over-rating the Virtues or Abilities of the Gentlemen, to whom HIS MAJESTY shall intrust the Administration, let us only allow them that moderate Pittance of Understanding, which every Man is willing to acknowledge in his Neighbour, while he blesses his Stars, that a better Portion is fallen to his own Lot; let us imagine only, that they are conscious of the Difficulties of their Undertaking, and foresee the Opposition, which the Patriots are already forming against them; that this Opposition will descend upon them in a Torrent of Eloquence, animated by other Passions besides the Love of Country; let these Concessions be granted, and it will follow in unavoidable Conclusion, that they must certainly have formed some Plan of Counsels and Operations, which may still preserve themselves and the Nation; particularly, that they are assured of being able to raise the Supplies. Either this Conclusion is just, or their whole Conduct is Madness, although it undoubtedly will not be punished as Madness.

If they succeed, we shall then see, what for too many Years we have never seen, a constitutional Ministry; for it is as indisputably a Maxim of the Constitution, that the King shall chuse his Ministers, as the People their Representatives. We shall then see a Ministry indebted to His MAJESTY alone for their Employments, and acting in their several Departments independent of each other; neither influenced by the Affections of Families and Alliances, nor determined by the Judgment, Opinion, Prejudice or Passions of a Superior in Office. We may then hope the Constitution will exert its own Vigour, and put forth its numerous Resources for its own Preservation.

A few Weeks, perhaps a few Days will be sufficient to determine upon our Hopes and Fears and Expectations. The Incapacity of the late Ministers was very soon discovered, and yet they were suffered without Opposition to hold that Power, which they had been equally bold in demanding, and weak in managing, until the whole Machine of Government stopped motionless under their Administration. The Nation may now demand the same equitable Treatment with Regard to any new Ministry; that some short Time may be allowed them to propose, and endeavour to execute whatever Measures they think conducive to the public Welfare. But probably not in this Manner will our present Patriot chuse to declare his Love of Country. Indeed he were much unwise in such a Choice, since the Vehemence of his Elocution, and the Spirit of Violence, that hath always actuated his political Conduct, are certainly shewn to greatest Advantage in an Opposition.

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